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RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO IMMEDIATE 3725
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L KABUL 000241

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STATE FOR SCA/FO DAS MOON AND EUR VOLKER
OSD FOR U/S EDELMAN, ASD LONG AND DASD SHIVERS
NSC FOR WOOD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/21/2018

TAGS: [MARR](#) [NATO](#) [PREL](#) [FR](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: FRENCH ROLE IN AFGHANISTAN: WINDOW FOR HIGH LEVEL
PUSH

REF: A. 07 KABUL 04208

[1](#)B. 07 USNATO 0610

Classified By: Ambassador William Wood, Sections 1.4 b&d.

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: The French Charge has suggested that, if FM Kouchner returns to Afghanistan before the March NATO Foreign Ministerial, he should meet with high-level Americans and travel to Kandahar to see how other Allies are managing in the South. Paris is thinking about an expanded French role in Afghanistan and there may now be a window of opportunity for the U.S. to influence French planning, suggesting that perhaps a POTUS call to President Sarkozy may be worthwhile.
END SUMMARY

[1](#)2. (C) On January 21, POLMILOFF met with French Charge d'Affaires Jean-Francois Fitou (please protect) to discuss (among other issues) future prospects for the French presence in Afghanistan. Fitou characterized the French Ambassador's visit to CJTF-82 at Bagram Air Base on January 6 as a success. Ambassador Koetschet had been impressed by MG Rodriguez and his staff's presentations, and had written a favorable report to Paris. French BG La Fontaine and COL Dupuy (French Defense Attache) had also been impressed by military coordination with civilian aspects of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), and with the Afghans on development and other issues, such as governance.

[1](#)3. (C) Fitou said that President Sarkozy was considering more French involvement in Afghanistan, was interested in Nimroz province, and in establishing a PRT. High-level diplomacy could help in the formulation of French thinking in Paris.

[1](#)4. (C) Fitou said that FM Kouchner had told him recently that he would make a return trip to Kabul, perhaps before the NATO Foreign Ministerial in March. If Kouchner does come, Fitou thinks it would be worthwhile for him to meet with senior U.S. officials in Afghanistan to explain the American perspective, and perhaps provide site visits, like Koetschet's visit to Bagram. If Kouchner does visit Afghanistan soon, the French Embassy planned to take him to Kandahar, in the south, so he could talk to the UK, Canada and other Allies about what they are doing.

[1](#)5. (C) Fitou thought that President Sarkozy and FM Kouchner are looking at a grander political French role in Afghanistan, noting that "with 1300 troops mostly concentrated in Kabul, France is more like a B player, and

Sarkozy wants to be an A player." Fitou said that an announcement might be made at the NATO Summit. The U.S. should weigh in at high levels to help in that thinking, perhaps with a POTUS call to President Sarkozy.

COMMENT

¶6. (C) Per REF B, and in our discussions with ISAF, we understand that the ideal French donations would be: Transport/Attack Rotary Wing Aviation for Regional Command-South; a Special Operations Task Group (SOTG); a PRT for Nimroz Province along with a Maneuver Battalion by the second half of 2008; and two additional battalion-level OMLTs.

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